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Discovering design narratives to humanize organizations

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Workshop Purpose and Aims

Human-centered design approaches have emerged in business organizations since the rise of service design and design thinking. As a consequence, designers have been shifting their role from pure aesthetics towards innovating. Thus, in this workshop, we look at the role of design and designer in the frame of designing organizations. Lots of designers are becoming involved in strategic projects in the context of organizational change, such as creating a more creative, design-driven work attitude, bringing a human perspective into existing processes and acknowledging employee's individual diversity. But, do designers feel prepared for that? Are they aware of the organizational design narratives of companies?

Mostly, the introduction of new practices labeled as design thinking or service design is not adapted to the organizational circumstances, company values, habits, beliefs and experiences. However, we believe that each company would benefit from emphasizing its design narrative while introducing employees to new design practices in order to exploit its full potential and stay healthy as an organization.

Especially identifying solutions that fit both to the needs of users and to the organizational environment is challenging. Here, the lack of communication about an organizational design narrative challenges the work of a designer. Rather, the use of design activities is seen through new initiatives, such as labs, workspaces and innovation projects that aim to disrupt the organization towards more human-centric culture.

We, the workshop convenors, did a conceptual literature review to explore the topic of *humanizing an organization* by building upon co-created dimensions that have been developed with design scholars and practitioners in 2018. We identified four aggregated themes around management, design and organizational change. Each theme describes one aspect relevant to *humanizing an organization*.

During the workshop, participants use the two dimensions of pre-text and context of organizational design narratives as a basis for creating future scenarios for strategies to humanize an organization. The workshop aims to raise awareness for an organizational design narrative, to strengthen participants sensibility for organizational design practices and to deliver hands-on methods for experiencing and exploiting the approach.

Through a practical workshop approach, we are positioning and exploring the phenomena of humanizing organizations in design research by linking historical roots with complex issues currently arising in the context of design management and organizational change.

Theoretical Relation

The idea of reflecting and being aware of the organizational design narrative is firstly claimed by Junginger and Bailey in 2017. According to them (2017, p.39), a design narrative *aligns the design pre-*



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text and the design context of an organization with other narratives and reconstructs the organizational journey, the design practices, design principles and design methods, as well as fosters its resilience.

Workshop Approach

Through the interactive workshop concept, we introduce a design framework built through a selection of tools and methods to help participants first to identify an organizational design narrative, and second, to create future scenarios with strategies for fitting the organizational design narrative to design activities for a more humanized organization.

The workshop structure is built through three main parts:

1. **Introduction:** The workshop topic is introduced by the convenors through synthesized results of the literature review in a presentation of maximum 20 minutes at the beginning of the workshop. The presentation also includes the introduction of the workshop agenda.
2. **Interactive team work:** After the introduction, the participants are divided into groups working on the given main themes identified in the literature review.
 - a. The teams are given a description of their theme, as well as a predefined organizational context as a basis for the exercise.
 - b. After getting familiar with the material, teams are guided through an exercise to (1) recognize and complete the dimensions of *pre-text* and *context* of the design narrative, and to (2) create a future scenario for humanizing the organization.
 - c. All materials are provided as paper-based templates.
 - d. Convenors are guiding the teams through the exercises step by step ending up in a block of 45 minutes in total.
3. **Wrap up:** At the end of the workshop, each team will present their results, sharing learnings and reflections utilizing the working templates as their structure. The presentations are filmed as short video clips for documentation purposes. (20 min)

The maximum number of participants for the workshop is 30 people. The participants will be divided into groups of maximum five people in each.

Takeaways for the Participants

The workshop exercises will result in narrated future scenarios of humanized organizations. The outcomes serve as a framework for the participants to take design actions in their own or their client's organizations for more humanized practice.

Results and Final Reflections for Consideration

The workshop facilitators are building the workshop upon a literature review in the context of humanizing organizations through design. By transferring the theoretical results in practical exercises and presentable design narratives, the fields of research and practice are linked in a collaborative format. The workshop results will be documented as a workshop report building on the literature review through the notes of the teams on paper templates accompanied by photos and short videos of the presentations.

Further Literature

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